



Illustration by Charles Feddema;
From 'Manual of the Carices of the Rocky
Mountains and Colorado Basin'

CAREX STENOPTILA **SMALL-WINGED SEDGE**

Small-winged Sedge is a grass-like perennial with stems that are 20-80 cm high, growing in clumps and arising from short rhizomes. Leaves are few, flat, 1-4 mm wide, and clustered near the base. Flowers are clustered in 7-10 spikes aggregated into a tight head at the top of the stem. The female perigynia occupy most of the spike, with only a few inconspicuous male flowers at the base. The light brown perigynia are narrowly lance-shaped and 4-5 mm long, with a gently tapered tip that is entire-margined, deeply cleft, and round in cross-section at the tip. There are 5-7 nerves on the convex outer face of the perigynium. The dark to pale brown scales are smaller than the perigynia that they subtend. Each perigynium has 2 stigmas and an achene that is lens-shaped and fills the body. Fruiting in July-August.

Distiguated from the more common *CAREX MICROPTERA* in that the achenes of the latter do not fill the flattened perigynia. *C. PHAECOCEPHALA* has scales as long as the perigynia. *C. MACLOVIANA*, *C. MULTICOSTATA*, and *C. PACHYSTACHYA* have more egg-shaped perigynia. A hand lens or microscope and technical key are needed for positive identification.